

Dialogue Group nets big UK insurance client

The Admiral Group, one of the biggest suppliers of vehicle insurance direct to the UK public, has just joined the rapidly growing client list of the Dialogue Group, the contact service centre with management offices in London, Seattle, Cape Town and Johannesburg.

Initial involvement will be the handling of some 3 000 calls a day to renew and update insurance contracts for Admiral's UK clients from Dialogue's Cape Town office, confirmed chairman Jason Drew. "Admiral has provided a senior representative to the Cape Town office in the role of account manager. In addition, the company has sent in a team to train local staff to its specifications."

Drew said bringing client representatives directly into the operational side of the business was becoming an increasingly important tool not only to ensure client corporate culture was understood and followed by call agents, but also to create a strong sense of partnership between service provider and client. "By investing human resources in Dialogue, Admiral is forging an alliance with us to appropriately manage growth. At the same time our practitioners become fully conversant with client culture in order to provide a seamless service to customers."

The Admiral contract follows hot on the heels of Dialogue's signing up a major hotel reservation agency, placestostay.com, which manages the bookings on behalf of four major international hotel groups, Six Continents, InterContinental, Hilton and Accor. The Cape Town office will cover UK and European bookings, handling around 12 500 calls a month across a range of European languages. "Fortunately, the city has access to fluent speakers of German, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch," Drew said.

He added that Dialogue's aggressive growth had necessitated a major focus on staff training. "Central to our training is that our call operators should imbibe and express the highly individual corporate cultures of each of our clients. That we are succeeding is borne out by the growing number of clients operating in specific sectors of the market. We service a range of clients in the insurance, health care and the hospitality industries, each with their own uniquely tailored specifications."

Dialogue has also extended its support to the Western Cape government's Cape Gateway project which provides easy public access to its departments.

The contact solution company, which began with a staff of 110, expects to employ around 3 000 people by 2005 and is actively recruiting call centre agents.

Speaking at a city conference on the contact centre industry on November 3, Dialogue's international marketing and client services director Marc Spendlove said South Africa was fast proving its capabilities among international clients. "More companies have outsourced to South Africa in the last month than in the whole of 2002. National Government is anticipating that by 2008, the contact services sector will have created about 100 000 jobs."

To accelerate the process, he called for the local industry to present a united front, for continued and clear Government support and the need to eliminate unnecessary red tape.